

White House is insisting that infrastructure investment needs to be part of this negotiation.

A third of our deficit is due to chronic high unemployment in the United States of America. If we could put people back to work, a third of the deficit goes away. What if we put them to work rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure? There are 150,000 bridges in America that need substantial repair or replacement. Forty percent of the pavement on the National Highway System doesn't just need resurfacing. It needs to be dug up; it needs new roadbed. And there is a \$70 billion backlog on transit systems in this country, replacing worn, outmoded equipment. Those are manufacturing jobs, energy jobs—jobs not only in construction, but in many other areas; and they spill over into small business and the general economy.

□ 1030

We also need to build an efficient 21st century infrastructure. It's about 27,000 jobs for every billion dollars we invest. Now, historically we haven't borrowed money to make these investments. We have paid for our infrastructure with fees and taxes—principally the gas tax, but others, but the Federal gas tax hasn't changed since 1993. In 1993, you paid \$1.11 for a gallon of gas and 18.4 cents went to build our national infrastructure. This last year in my district, people paid over \$4.40 for a gallon of gas and 18.4 cents went to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure.

We've lost more than a third of the purchasing power of the highway trust fund just due to inflation. Over the next 2 years we will borrow \$18 billion just to tread water with the highway trust fund, and if we want to tread water over the next 10 years we'll borrow another \$110 billion. Will that happen in deficit-obsessed Washington, D.C.? Not likely. Does that mean quicker deterioration of our infrastructure? Does that mean we forego the jobs? Perhaps not.

If we just simply indexed the existing Federal gas tax set in 1993 at 18.4 cents to highway cost construction inflation and improved fleet fuel economy—so that you don't lose ground because people purchase less gas—we could, over the next decade, save \$128 billion—deficit reduction—and have an additional increment on top of that to begin to catch up with the huge backlog in our crumbling infrastructure in this country and put millions of people to work. It seems a very sensible solution: deficit reduction, jobs, and sound infrastructure. I hope those on the other side of the aisle will be receptive to the proposals from the White House for this needed investment.

This isn't the stupid stimulus bill that threw everything but the kitchen sink at the economy. Many things were not well spent. Four percent of that money went to infrastructure investment; over 40 percent went to stupid tax cuts that didn't put anybody back to work.

NEWTOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, our hearts are grieving with the entire Newtown community and all the families who lost loved ones last Friday. We mourn the 26 innocent lives, including those 20 children who have been lost in this unimaginable tragedy. Let me also just acknowledge the quick action of the brave law enforcement and first responders who prevented additional losses of life.

Words cannot express my deep sorrow, but as a mother and as a grandmother I join the country and my district in extending my condolences to every family and the entire community touched by this unspeakable tragedy.

This violence must stop. As President Obama so eloquently said on Sunday, we cannot accept that this violence visited on children year after year is somehow the price of freedom. No more excuses, Madam Speaker. No more kicking the can down the road. Not one more innocent life—not one more in Chicago, not one more in Oakland, not one more in any town, in any city, in any school, in any theater, or in any place of worship, in any mall, or in any of our neighborhoods. We have an obligation to our children to ensure that Newtown marks a turning point that made us finally say, enough is enough.

My district, unfortunately, knows these weapons of war oh so well, where too many innocent children continue to be killed in these war zones. We must come together to build an America where our children do not have to live in fear and where they do have a future.

Madam Speaker, we need to take some serious action that includes gun safety by banning these high-capacity magazines, expanding the 24-hour gun background check, closing the gun show loophole, and reinstituting the assault weapons ban immediately. This of course includes ending violence in our homes, in our streets, and in our communities.

By seeking input from young people, community stakeholders, the faith community and others, we need to work together to identify the root causes of this country's more than 16,000 homicides a year—this also includes recognizing gun violence as a critical public health crisis—and continue to support comprehensive violence prevention plans.

I've heard many say this over and over again, but we also must focus on making mental health care widely accessible and affordable. As a psychiatric social worker and someone who founded a community mental health center when the psychiatric facilities were beginning to shut down, I understand firsthand why we need to look at how we have to help people struggling with mental illness and make serious progress in treatment

and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help.

All of this of course is going to take resources. Nowhere do we know this more than in my own congressional district in Alameda County and in Oakland, where we know all too well the impact of budget cuts on violence and crime. We cannot allow any cuts to Medicare and Medicaid that might prevent families from getting the psychiatric help and support that they need. How else can we look at our children and our grandchildren this holiday season if we don't move as a Nation to finally address this violence that threatens the very core of our country?

In the coming weeks, all of us must work with President Obama, Senator FEINSTEIN, Congresswoman CAROLYN MCCARTHY, Congressman BOBBY SCOTT and all of our colleagues to be brave and to be bold enough to pass measures that ensure gun safety and a comprehensive solution to ensure that our children have a future in a peaceful Nation.

Madam Speaker, we can and we must do all of these things and more so that we can prevent tragedies like this from ever happening again.

On behalf of all my constituents, let me express once again our thoughts and our prayers for all of those impacted by this tragedy in Newtown and the entire State of Connecticut.

SANDY HOOK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SHOOTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FUDGE. Madam Speaker, it is with great sorrow that I rise today to address the senseless murders that took place in Newtown, Connecticut, this past Friday. Mass shootings are always difficult to bear. This one is exceptionally disturbing due to the loss of so many children and those who bravely tried to protect them.

The massacre that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School will forever be embedded in our memory, as will the photos of 20 children as young as 5 years of age who perished in that school, a place that should be safe, a school. These innocent children will never have the opportunity to enjoy their teenage years, to go to a prom, or have families of their own. We owe a debt of gratitude to the teachers who lost their lives trying to shield our children from this senseless crime.

I stand here today unable to make sense of what is a completely incomprehensible situation. We may never know what compelled the shooter in this tragedy to use such high-powered weapons to inflict pain on so many innocent people, but what we do know is that these kinds of crimes are on the rise in our society.

Gun violence, and the culture associated with it, has become so prevalent that now our babies can't even go to